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A NOTE

ON THE

Antiquity of the Ramayana



BY

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A Note ON THE ANTIQUITY OF THE RAMAYANA.

Now that the great epic of Válmiki has been translated into Italian, French and English, and partly into Latin by such eminent and deep-read scholars as Signor Gorresio, M. Hippolite Fauche, Mr. Ralph T. Griffith and William Von Schlegel, and rendered easily accessible to readers in Europe and America, a happy dawn is on the horizon of oriental history, obscured for centuries by impenetrable fog of neglect and ignorance.

Public interest is being awakened even in degenerate India, the ancient cradle of the glories of the Aryan race, to the importance of the subject, which was hitherto almost hopelessly consigned to the realms of fiction.

Though the original Rámáyana has been saved from oblivion by modern scholars, it is no easy task to clear it from the traditions and legends which, from time out of memory "gathered round it like ivy and parasites, clinging to the trunks of aged oaks."

Thanks to the labours of the indefatigable scholars, named above, who have brought to light the real character of the great work of Válmiki and have exposed several errors and fallacies which obtained currency for some time from the imperfect, off-hand knowledge and hasty surmises of some workers in the same field.

In my Note on the Geography of Válmiki Rámáyana recently published, I have tried to prove that Válmiki dealt with

cally extinct with their death. Jatáyu was Dasaratha's friend and ally and fought with Rávana, in his flight with Sitá, and was mortally wounded by him.

(2) The *Vánar* tribes of Kiskindhá, ruled by Báli, who kept in check Rávana's power in the Deccan.

(3) The *Rákshasa* tribes governed by Rávana in *Lanká* (Ceylon) and by his lieu-tenants Khara and Dusan in the tract along the western Ghats up to *Janasthán*, on the upper sources of the Godávari, corresponding very nearly with modern Nasik district. The *Vánars* were not actually the monkeys they are represented to be in the legends.

The *Vánar* Chiefs with whose help Ráma collected a large army and fought with Rávana were aboriginal princes who ruled over almost all the tracts lying to the south and east of the Aryan possessions in India at that early time. The word *Vánar* originally meant "the dwellers of the *Vana* (forest)," or a people like *nara* (man) a term by which the Indian Aryans designated themselves. It is probably derived from *vá* ॥ like, and *nara* man, and was specially applied to the wild tribes of the south as the name *Kinnara* (*Kim* ॥ indicative of doubt and *nara* ॥) was similarly used to designate the hill tribes of the north, particularly those of the Snowy range. Signor Gorresio points out that *Sugriva's* story in Book IV paints in vivid colors the manners, customs and ideas of the wild mountain tribes who inhabited *Kishkindha* on the Southern hills of the Deccan, that is of the people whom the poem calls *Vánar* tribes, and who were altogether different in origin and civilization from the Indo-Aryan race. *Sugriva* is said to have summoned all the Chiefs who ruled over the *Vánar* and the kindred races, even from the heights of the Kailása in *Himavat* (Tibet) and the Himálayan Range. They came not only from those hilly

regions, but from the plains, rivers, valleys, sea-coasts and from the remote islands as well ;—

" From many a *sea* and distant hill
From rock and river, lake and rill ;
Some like the morning sun were *bright*,
Some like the moon were *silver-white* ;
These *green* as lotus-fibres, those,
White-coated from their native snows.

(Rám. IV. 39 Griffith's translation.)

The description of the different complexions of the various *Vánar* tribes who assembled at Kishkindhá in response to king Sugriva's behest deserves notice.

The white and the light complexions of the wild races inhabiting the Himálaya and the connected ranges, contrast with the brown and dark complexions of the aboriginal tribes of the Central and Southern India ; and with the yellow and brown races of Burmah, Siam, *Malay* peninsula, and *Malaysia*. The *Vánar* chief Kumuda held his sway up to the river Gomati (Gumti) ; Panasa came from Párijatra hills (Aravali range) in western Rájputna ; Dhumra and his brother *Jámbuvánu* ruled over the Riksha or *Bhalla* (half hidden in the term *Bhil*) tribes of the *Rikshaván* range, abounding in bears (*Bhal-lukas*), and drank the water of the upper Nerbuda. Pramatha and his *hari* tribes dwelt on the *Mandár* hill, in south Bhagalpore and the Sonthal pergunahs, and *Kesari* father of *Hanumán* belonged to the Mahá Meru or the golden mountain in the north. Báli, so called from his thick hair, the brother of Sugriva, was killed by Ráma and *cremated* according to the custom then prevalent among the *Vánars*, while the *Rákshasas* were *buried*, as was the case with Virádha. Tárá, the widow of Báli became the wife of Sugriva his younger brother, according to a custom, which still obtains in parts of Southern India, particularly Orissa. whence the adage (utkale devarah patih

उत्पत्तये देवः पतिः). There are people in Orissa, who still trace their origin from Báli, just as the Tibetans claim their descent from the patriarch Monkey "Hanumán."

The *Rákshasas* probably belonged to a still greater race which played an important part in the history of the world before the rise of the Aryans.

"Towards the southern extremity and in the island of Lanka (Ceylon) there existed undoubtedly, a black and ferocious race, averse to the Aryans and hostile to their mode of worship: their ramifications extended through the *Islands of the Archipelago*, and some traces of them remain in *Java* to this day.

The Sanskrit Indians represented it as monstrous, changing forms at will, blood-thirsty and ravenous, just as the *Semites* represented the races that opposed them as impious, horrible and of monstrous size. But notwithstanding those mythical exaggerations which are partly due to the genius of the Aryans so prone to magnify everything without measure, the *Rámáyana* in the course of its epic narrations, has still preserved and noted here and there some traits and peculiarities of the race which reveal its true character. It represents the *Rákshasas* as black of hue, and compares them with black clouds, it attributes to them *curly woolly hair* and *thick lips*, it depicts them as loaded with chains, collars and girdles of gold, and other bright ornaments which their race has always loved and in which the kindred races of the *Soudan* still delight. Such is the *Rákshasa* race as represented in the *Rámáyana* and the war of the Aryan-Ráma forms the subject of the epic, a subject certainly real and historical as far as regards its substance, but greatly exaggerated by the ancient myths."

Dr. John Fraser, L. L. D. in a recent article in the *Polyesian Journal* Vol. IV. has shewn that the earliest population of Ceylon was a pre-Aryan black race and that the Drávidian

tribes of the Deccan descended from them, that portions of that race were by the Aryan occupation of India driven onwards into the Eastern peninsula, *Indonesia* and *Oceania* and that the *Melanesians* are their modern representatives.

The tide of migration he observes, flowing on the one hand to the east and south-east from India into *further* India, and what is now called the *Malay* archipelago, and on the other, from India and Ceylon, west and south-west, into the *Maldives* and onwards into *Madagascar*, where the reigning language is well known to be a branch of the so-called *Malay Polynesian* family."

It would appear from the above that the so-called *Rákshasas* were a powerful race, whose ramifications spread over not only India and the islands of the Indian ocean but probably also over Africa and Egypt in an earlier stage of the world's history, and that on their decay, has risen the great Aryan race, destined to rule the earth.

Rávana was a great monarch and his conquests extended over parts of Northern India also. His nephew Lavan, was the ruler of Madhupur in the valley of the Jamna. Prince Satrugghna, Rama's youngest brother killed him and founded the town of Madhura or Mathura (Muttra), the delightful city, famous at a later time as the birth place of Krishna. Tádaká and her son *Múricha*, Rávana's kinsman, occupied the tract between the Ganges and the Sone, known at that time as Malaja (sprung from defilement), and believed by some to be the *Eka-chakra* of the Mahá Bhárat and *Arrah* of modern time. Tádaká was killed by Ráma in his boyhood, at the instance of the sage Viswámित्रa, his tutor in the use of arms.

In the Rámáyana we find descriptions of 3 great dynasties of the Aryans :—

- (1) The Solar dynasty represented by Ráma.

(2) The Lunar dynasty represented by king Janaka of Mithila.

(3) The Kausika dynasty, founded by king Kusa. The sage Viswámitra belonged to this family. The 4 sons of Kusa are said to have founded four kingdoms. Kusa-nábha founded Kausámbi (Kosam). Kusa-nábha ruled in *Mahodaya* (modern Kanauj); Amurta-Rajas established himself in *Dharmáranya* (between Panchála and North Kosala) and *Vasu*, the youngest of them, founded *Giri-Vraja* (the hill surrounded city) in Magadha (Behar) identified with the *Rajgriha* (Rajgir) of the Buddhistic period. It was ruled by the great Jará-Sandha, Krishna's antagonist, in the time of the Mahá Bhárat. There was another *Giri-Vraja*, which was the capital of *Kekaya* country, between the Beas and the Sutlej, ruled by *Aswa-pati* (Lord of the horses) father of *Kaikeyi*, the favourite queen of Dasarath.

Of the 7 rivers or *Sapta Sindhu* (known even to Virgil, Book IX of the *Ænied*) in the north mentioned in the *Rámáyana*, the *Ganges* was the central; the easternmost was the *Nalini* (lotus-clad), probably the *Brahmaputra*, a name which was unknown at the time of the *Rámáyana*; and *Su-chakshu* (fair-eyed) in the north-west, may be identified with the *Oxus*, (Sanskrit *okshi*, an eye).

In the map of ancient India prepared by me, the *Aryan* possessions have been marked *red*, those of *Kiskindha* and the allied tracts inhabited by the *Vánars* and kindred races, in *Yellow*, and *Rávana's* possession in *Green*.

This was the state of the country as depicted in the *Rámáyana*, and bears a striking contrast with India as described in the Mahá Bhárat, when the *Aryan* possessions extending from *Dwárka* (the city founded by Krishna) in the west and *Manipur* on the borders of modern *Assam* said to have been

conquered by Arjuna in the east and over the greater part of the Deccan in the south. As however some scholars have hazarded the opinion that the period of the Mahá Bhárat or the war of the Kurus and Pándavas was anterior to that of the Rámáyana, Gorresio found it necessary to refute it in the preface of his great work. If the posteriority of the Mahá Bhárat, he observes, were not declared in the epic itself, which says that the exploits of Ráma had already been sung by Válmiki, it would be sufficiently proved by the fact that there is embodied in the Mahá Bhárat a summary of the Rámáyana, besides numerous allusions to Rámáyanic characters, throughout its long narrative.

The life and worship of Krishna celebrated in the Mahá Bhárat indicate an age later than the Rámáyana in which there is no mention of Krishna or of the Kauravas and the Pándavas. The antiquity of the Rámáyana is confirmed by the various popular traditions diffused through the whole of India, even to the remote regions of Tibet upon the *epopea* of Válmiki.

Rai Sarat Chandra Das, C.I.E., has published several Tibetan legends, according to which the ancient family of Tibet claimed its descent from *Hanumán*. The Burmese have had their version of the Rámáyana and the fight of Ráma with Dasagiri (the wearer of ten-peaked crown) is still a favourite theme with them.

The fight with Rávana I should point out was forced upon unhappy Ráma by unfortunate circumstances (*i.e.*, the carrying away of his wife by that king, from his forest residence during his exile) and was *not the invasion of Lanká by the Aryan prince for the sake of conquest*, as has been erroneously supposed by some of the scholars. It is also argued by some that the story of the Rámáyana reveals a higher stage of *civilization* than that of the Mahá Bhárat.

Civilization is a vague and misleading word and may be made to shift its color like the chameleon of the story, to suit a writer's view.

The Rámáyana, I should point out, reveals a *higher stage of moral life*, which characterizes the rise of a great nation, while the Mahá Bhárat witnessed the *demoralized days* of the Indian Aryans after centuries of political changes before their actual downfall.

The *caste* system which was originally based on *personal character and calling* of the people became rigidly a matter of *birth* in the time of the Mahá Bhárat, while in the Rámáyana we find that the Kshatriya-monarch Viswámitra attained the rank of a Bráhmaṇ by dint of merit. Sub-division of castes, by intermarriages and illicit connections became numerous in the Mahá Bhárat period, and no mention of such castes as the *Gopas* (milkmen) with whom Krishna's name is so largely connected, is found in the Rámáyana. Purity of female character has been the pride of the Indian Aryans from remote antiquity as is exemplified in the characters represented in the Ramayana and it culminated in the course of time to the practice of self-immolation of widows on the funeral piles of their husbands, commonly known as the *Sati*. No instance of this custom is to be found in the Rámáyana. In the Mahá Bhárat, *Mádrí*, the second wife of Pándu committed *Sati*, and yet this was the *age* when the marriage tie had lost its sanctity to a certain extent and the relation between man and woman became somewhat lax; and the practice of getting sons through outsiders on the *Kshetraja*-system (the worst of the several kinds of sons noticed in the institutes of Manu) was brought into requisition to prevent extinction of families through sterility. The birth of Dhrita-Ráshtra and Pándu and the 5 Pándavas may be cited as instances.

Then there is the episode of the marriage of Draupadi, princess of Panchála with the 5 Pándavas. This was a most

singular and extraordinary occurrence and no other instance of the kind is to be found in the history or legends of the Aryan race. It has been explained in no less extraordinary way by the author of the Mahá Bhárat himself.

Arjuna, the 3rd son of Pándu won the hand of Draupadi at the great tournament of archery held for her marriage in the Court of Drupada, the king of the Panchlâas, and after she was brought to the potter's cottage, where the brothers were living in poverty at the time, one of them announced to their mother *Kunti*, that they had brought an excellent thing, by their labours of the day. Kunti thought they had brought some fruit or article of food by begging and told them to divide it among themselves. This was merely a plea for the 5 brothers, whose love towards one another had knit them as it were into one person to take the princess as their common wife. The poor king Drupada and his family were horrified by so absurd and ridiculous a proposal which was contrary to the *Sâstras*, established usage and rules of society and common sense. Even the sage *Vyâsa* whose opinion was sought was at his wit's end as to what to say.

The great personal charms of the princess which fascinated the 5 brothers undoubtedly constituted the real secret at the bottom of so reckless a departure from the established custom of the country even in that *demoralized* age. Yudhishthira the eldest brother unable to meet the arguments of Drupada, at last declared that what he thought to be right must be right and he would not bear opposition.

When *Vyâsa* found him inexorable he recited some extraordinary legends and supernatural events of the 'princess' former life, to prepare her for her lot and to justify the course to the credulous court of Panchâla. For this ridiculous marriage, Draupadi was despised by the Kauravas and was regarded by them as worse than a harlot. The public insult

to which she was subjected by Duryyodhana and his brother, after she was staked and lost in gambling by Yudhisthira, was the real cause of the great war between the two families, on the field of ill-fated Kurukshetra which decimated the Aryan race and led ultimately to its downfall.

Krishna, the real hero of the Mahá Bhárat is said to have incarnated to relieve the Earth from the load of sins and the mass of wicked people in those degenerate times. The great family of the *Jádavas* another branch of the Aryan race to which Krishna himself belonged perished disgracefully at the same time in a row of drunkenness.

These are sure proofs of the extreme *demoralization* which prevailed at the time of the main events of the Mahá Bhárat.

In the preface to the third part of my translation of Káli Dása's Raghu Vamsa, 4 genealogical tables, according to Káli Dása, Vishnu Purána, Padma Purána and Todd's Annals of Rájasthán, are given of the Solar dynasty, of which the direct line ended with Sumitra, in the *Kali juga* or the present cycle :—

Genealogical table of the Solar dynasty.

KÁLI DÁSA	VISHNU PURÁNA	PADMA PURÁNA	TODD'S RÁJASTHÁN
Ráma	Ráma	Ráma	Ráma
(a) (b)			
(1) Kusa and Lava	Do.	Do.	Lava
(2) Athithi	Do.	Do.	Do.
(3) Nishadh	Do.	Do.	Do.
(4) Nala	Do.	Do.	Nala or Nabha
(5) Nabha	Do.	Do.	
(6) Pundarika	Do.	Do.	Do.
(7) Khem Dhanwá	Do.	Do.	Do.
(8) Debánika	Do.	Do.	Megha Dhanwá
(9) Ahina-gu	Do.	Ahina	
(10) Párijátra	Rupa	Paripatra	
(11) Sila	Puru	Bala	Bala
(12) Unnábha	Paripatra	Sthala	Sula

KĀLI DĀSA	VISHNU PURĀNA	PADMA PURĀNA	TODD'S RĀJASTHĀN
(13) Vajra-nābha	Dala	Vajra-nābha	Vajra-nābha
(14) Sankhana		Sagana	Saujansa
(15) Byusitāswa	Uktha		Byusitāswa
(16) Viswa Saha	Vajra-nābha	Vidhriti	Vidhrita
(17) Hiranya-nābha	Sankh-nābha	Hiranya-nābha	Do.
(18) Kausalya	Byushitāswa		
(19) Brahmista	Viswa Saha		
(20) Putra	Hiranya-nābha		
(21) Pausya	Pusya	Puspa	Puspaka
(22) Dhruva-sandhi	Do.	Do.	
(23) Sudarsana	Sudarsana	Sudarsana	Sudarsana
(24) Agnivarna	(25) Sighra	Do.	Do.
	(26) Maru	Do.	Do.
	(27) Prasu Sruta	Do.	Do.
		Do.	Do.
	(28) Sugandhi	Sandhi	Satsandha
	(29) Amarsha	Amarsan	Amarsandha
	(30) Mahaswān	Do.	Abaswāyana
	(31) Bisrutavān	Biswa-vāhu	Biswa-sabha
			Prasena-jit
	(32) Brihad-vala	Do.	

The Rājasthān puts 2 kings named Takshaka and Prasena-jit after Biswa-sabha against No. 31 and Vrihad-vala is named as succeeding Takshaka thus :—

(31) Bisrutavān	Biswa-vāhu	Biswa-sabha
		Prasena-jit
		Takshaka
(32) Brihad-vala	Brihad-vala	Brihad-vala

It will appear from these tables, that the 32nd king after Rāma was *Brihad-vala* (mighty in strength) who took the side of the Kauravas, like most other princes of legitimate birth and ancient lineage, who rallied under their flag. He took an active part in the war and was one of the 7 heroes who fought

with *Abhi-Manyu*, son of Arjuna, and was killed by him. Thus the Kurukshetra war took place 32 generations after Ráma.

The great Indian author, Bankim Chandra, in his elaborate work on the life of Krishna has shewn that the great war of Mahá Bhárat took place 1115 years before Chandra Gupta, in whose reign Alexander the Great invaded India and he places it in 1430 B.C. Considering the longevity of people in those times, 32 generations on an average of 30 years would place Ráma in 2390 B.C. while Sir William Jones supposed it to be in 2029 B.C. This is at best another probable conjecture and I need hardly add that careful study and research in future might throw fresh light on this obscure subject, and we cannot be positive in our assertions. I conclude this note by quoting the appropriate remarks of an able writer in the West Minister Review Vol. L taken from Mr. Griffith's *Rámáyana*:—"In such poems as the *Rámáyana* and the *Illiad*, we instinctively feel that they belong to the earlier world. We enter them as we enter a house in *Pompeii*—the colours seem still fresh and no mark of decay reminds us of their age, but we feel they belong not to us, or ours, and a gulf of age lies between us and our objects."





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